2; Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

572 Woman had sung around the circle once, he led his party to Bull Lodge's tipi. The latter was suspicious and thought: 'I'm in for it now!' Sits Like A Woman went up to Bull Lodge, took him by the arm and said: 'Come, my friend.' He led him to the middle of the group of returned warriors. He then faced Bull Lodge and said in a jesting way: 'Stand still or I'll kill you.' Bull Lodge stood there and Sits Like A Woman took his rifle and, drumming with the stock on Bull Lodge's back, sang the following song: 'He who poisons (i.e., a medicine man with power to kill) has no penis.' Bull Lodge and his brothers-in-law realized that Sits Like A Woman was in earnest because not only was the song a great insult, but the victim's brothers-in-law were present,—which they should not have been when any reference to private parts was made.[33] The war party took up the song with enthusiasm as Sits Like A Woman told Bull Lodge again: 'Don't move yet—I'll kill you anyway.' He took Bull Lodge's new Hudson Bay blanket and slit it in two; he slashed Bull Lodge's shirt and took it off him; he slashed his leggings and removed them; and finally he cut the belt so that the breech-cloth fell to the ground. Bull Lodge was standing there naked. By that time the brothers-in-law had stolen away, one by one. Bull Lodge knew better than to run away, and Sits Like A Woman said: 'Perhaps you have power to poison people. If you have a mind to poison me, go ahead and try. I'm not afraid of you. If you choose to pay me back that way, you might just as well try it on the sun. Or, if you choose to pay me back in the way I have treated you, go ahead. But first lead a successful war party. If you then do to me what I have done to you, I won't be mad. But I'll lead still another war party and do far worse to you that second time than I have done this time.'

"After thinking it over, Bull Lodge decided to buy off his enemy-friend and the next morning he got together an armful of valuable things, filled a pipe and went to Sits Like A Woman. 'My friend,' he said, 'here's a pipe I am offering to you. You take this pipe so you will stop doing things like this to me. While I don't mind it, my brothers-in-law were there. And here are some things you can have.' Sits Like A Woman laughed, but ac-

[602 834]

[607]

[33] Relationship between brothers-in-law precluded any reference to sex and bodily exposure in each other's presence. See pp. 118–19.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

604 man, but his maternal uncle would be given the greatest amount of credit for his nephew's prowess, and he would rejoice more than the others in his nephew's successes.

426 604 A nephew could, if he wished, use his uncle's property without asking permission. If he damaged the property so borrowed, however, the uncle might reprimand him severely. Sometimes an uncle took the initiative and told one of his nephews: "All that I have is yours." In such a case, not only would the nephew be free to use the property without asking, but even if it were damaged—say a borrowed horse was carelessly injured or lost,—nothing would be said by the uncle nor any punishment inflicted. A nephew was supposed to be very respectful toward his uncle, but was freer with him than he could be with his own father. He could, for instance, joke with his uncle about being a lady's man, but he could not go too far in referring to sexual matters. He would not feel quite so embarrassed if his uncle should happen to see him unclothed, as would be the case with his father or his brother-in-law, but he would be far from comfortable in that situation.

834 291

604 The relationship between a man and his sister's daughter was not as direct as that between him and his sister's son. If a woman died, leaving orphan girls, it was not unusual that the wife of her brother would say: "I am going to take these girls so that I can have a son-in-law through them." This is what happened to Coming Daylight and her sister, whose maternal uncle took responsibility for them, although they were actually trained by his mother. It was he who arranged their marriages and it was to him they returned when widowed or divorced. His sons took the place of brothers to these two orphans.

While he did not take on the role of disciplinarian to his sister's daughters, whether or not their parents were living, the maternal uncle was expected to be generous to his nieces and to show his regard by giving things away in their honor. If a maternal uncle asked a niece for anything she possessed, she was supposed to give it to him without question, even though at considerable cost to herself. "Coming Daylight was asked by her uncle for the elk teeth she owned, to exchange with a Crow who had offered him an excellent race horse in return. She gave up these valuables without a word, though she hated to part with them since she did not know

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

607
834

Traditionally, all reference to sex was forbidden between brothers-in-law in private as well as in public. They would be embarrassed at bodily exposure in each other's presence and consequently did not go swimming together, nor relieve their bodily necessities in sight of each other, nor indeed break wind. They were, however, allowed and even expected to joke with one another, or, better, to mildly tease each other in public. This sort of "joking" was of a very different kind from that expected between brother- and sister-in-law or between enemy-friends. As an example, it was stated that a man might say to a prospective employer, when his brother-in-law was present: "I'm the best logger around here. My brother-in-law can't cut logs as well as I can. Why hire him?" The other was supposed to take such ribbing without losing his temper, but try to get even at some later date.

607

Among the younger generation of today, brothers-in-law still "josh" at each other's expense and in good nature, but they tend to disregard the respectful attitudes and to discuss tabooed subjects. Deploring this state of affairs, Coming Daylight commented: "These young men around here now are 'tough' just like the Assiniboine men always were. The Assiniboine never were ashamed in front of their sisters' husbands, whereas the Gros Ventres were different and knew better than to behave in such a way."

Even at the present time, nevertheless, just as in the past, brothers-in-law are supposed to be generous with each other. They would advise each other in regard to a good business proposition, give each other the benefit in anything along that line, help each other in such ways as in building a house, in giving presents away in public, and so on.

Reticence on matters connected with sex was practiced between sisters-in-law, a woman being careful what she said both to her brother's wife and to her husband's sister. It was stated, for example, that "a woman can tease her sister-in-law, but not in a bad way because she would be her brother's wife." The stock joke between sisters-in-law hinges upon stinginess. A woman could say to her brother's wife: "Oh, you stingy thing. You hid your knife," which would indicate that she is fond of her food and doesn't wish to share it. But sisters-in-law do not josh each other to the same extent as do brothers-in-law.

846 self had to get up sooner and help with cooking because she was an only wife, except for the short time during her first marriage when her sister was co-wife. The midwife usually stayed and looked after the infant for a few days, at least until the cord came off.

Coming Daylight always put on a belt of rawhide about a foot wide immediately after delivery and laced it up tighter each day. She said the Gros Ventre women were strict about this practice as it "put the figure back into place."

If a woman were able to rest quietly after childbirth the flow should stop in about two weeks. If she worked, it was longer, perhaps a month. At any rate, after the flow stopped, a woman wrapped a blanket around herself and someone then held under the blanket a pan of live coals on which medicine had been sprinkled. Woman claimed they felt much better after this "fumigation." There was also another medicine which Coming Daylight described as "good to clean you out after childbirth." This was made from a powdered root, a little pinch of which was put in a couple of quarts of water and turned the water about the color of tea. There was no bitter taste and the patient drank it like tea and instead of water.

[357]

[834] It was said that Gros Ventre men did not resume marital relations until at least a month after the baby was born,—often they deferred the resumption of relations even longer.

853 There was medicine given to make the mother's milk come. It was made from the same root as that used in the Crazy Dance. [278] The infant was not put to the breast immediately, as someone else drew out the "first milk" (colostrum) and spit it out. "After [825] that, the milk would be the right blue color. Should a woman be all alone when her child was born, she might have puppies draw out that 'first milk.'" Cora believes it is absolutely necessary to follow this rule. When her own daughter, for example, delivered her firstborn, an old woman offered to draw off this "first milk," but the daughter refused—so now she can give milk only from one breast and has to supplement her infant's feeding with milk from a bottle. No water or oil was given the infant before its first nursing. They started the baby to nurse after the colostrum had been drawn off "because there is something in the mother's milk that cleans the baby out."

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

vower and then for everybody. Next he smudged the drum four times,—the head, the rim twice, and the inside grip, in this order. Beating the drum he started to sing, and, as the others joined in the singing, he passed it to one of them.

Now the dancing began. The keeper himself danced first, at the far west end of the lodge in the place of honor, holding the Pipe stem up. Men and women, mostly relatives of the vower, would range themselves in a sort of half circle and dance with him, he alone holding the Pipe. The keeper continued dancing through the singing of four songs, and then passed the Pipe to the vower to dance with. The latter then danced with it through the singing of four songs. On the occasion of Jim Snow's vow fulfillment, after him danced Spotted Raven, no kin to Jim Snow, who for some reason had "thrown in" for the rite, and after Spotted Raven some of Jim's relatives, "maybe three or four" in turn,—in each case continuously dancing through the singing of four songs. In general, anyone, whether a relative of the vower or not, could dance with the Pipe if he or she paid to do so. Between each separate dancing and singing of four songs the Pipe was placed resting on its sage bed, and during these interim periods the participants and onlookers could chat, joke and have a social smoke, and, if they wished, go outside the lodge and walk around. Smudging [of Pipe? or of dancer?] preceded each dance.

According to Coming Daylight, a woman who took part in the Feathered Pipe dance had to abstain from sexual intercourse beforehand, apparently for two or three nights. "If you break that rule, not long after you dance it, something happens to you, some kind of hard luck, and it really never fails." When the Pipe dance was held in 1918, "one woman danced it after she had seen her man and she almost burned up and the same happened to her son and lightning struck his horse." Presumably this taboo held for men too, but we failed to make inquiries on the point.

Not only the vower but also all others who wanted to dance with the Pipe had to make payment for the privilege. As Al Chandler explained: "Jim Snow [after his vow and cure] came to see the keeper first and told him how many horses he would give and then during the dance Jim Snow himself started putting

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

782 *796 occupied a continuous four-day (or three-day and four-night) period.

782 *796 778 At some time during the preparatory period, prior to the start of the dance proper, the principal vower's ceremonial grandfather taught him how to dance with the sacred wheel which was in one sense the main ritual object used in the Sacrifice Dance. One such wheel, we were told, is still in existence, in the possession of Mrs. Grace Stevens, but we did not have an opportunity to see it. It was vaguely described to us as being not a "woven wheel" but only a "hoop" with some down feathers attached to it. In dancing with the wheel, the dancer sang and with his right arm hanging down held the wheel in his right hand and swung it back and forth. When he tired of swinging it in his right hand he changed it behind his back to his left and swung it. When the Sacrifice Dance proper began, the principal vower was given possession of it for the duration, with the full right to carry and swing it whenever during the rite he danced and to otherwise use it. If one of the other dancers weakened and fainted from hunger, thirst, fatigue or pain, the principal vower would go to him and pass the wheel back and forth in front of the unconscious man's face, and would so revive him. Whether other vowers than the principal one could ever dance with the wheel we did not discover.

*796 [834] Those who "joined" the dance, at least the principal and associate vowers, had to refrain from sexual intercourse for a while, say two or three nights, before the dance proper began.

The morning after the last of the four nights of singing began the ceremonial "scouting" for felling and fetching of the center pole of the dance lodge.

Early that morning, four prominent warriors, men who had been successful as scouts in sighting the enemy and bringing back information, were selected to go look for a center pole. Each had to put on his war accoutrements as if he were setting out on a war expedition. While the four were gone, those who had sent them gathered buffalo chips and put them in a pile. The four scouts on returning announced their approach by giving a special yell, and the people would say: "The scouts are coming." As the four approached closer to the waiting crowd who were ranged in a half-

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

*796 them and these offerings "hung thick up there." The offerings were made to the Supreme Being to ask long life and happiness.

After the lodge was up, all who were to "join" the Sacrifice Dance went inside. Dancing continued for the three (or two?) succeeding nights, we were informed, but we obtained no further details on the ritual followed during this preparatory interim period, except as regards fasting. Those at least who were to go through self-torture on the fourth day and apparently some of the other active participants had to observe a strict fast from food and drink during this four-day period as well as to abstain from sexual intercourse. Those so submitting themselves to this regime would be further tested out by singers. Songs might be sung, for instance, about water, with words such as, "all the rivers and creeks have run dry," or about love and women, all just to put the young men to the test. People who were not fasting would conspicuously display and eat food right under the eyes of the faster. One or other of the young men might weaken under these temptations and "sneak out and give up." If he did so the people would banter him: "You are no man. You can't stand it," and his father or uncle would "give him the dickens about it."

785 [785
● 834] 834]

Back of the fasting and sex abstinence as well as of the self-torture was a concept that was a basic theme of Gros Ventre religious culture in general, and that one of our informants, Al Chandler, expressed as follows: "The sacrifice [fasting, sex abstinence, self-torture] those men [of the Sacrifice Dance] made was like penance because they thought you could not get anything unless you punished yourself, for God was not going to give you anything if you went out there laughing and full of good food. He won't help you that way." Making one's self "pitiful" when seeking power of or answer to prayer is a part of this concept or closely related to it.

785
*796

*796 During the whole Sacrifice Dance the vowers were supposed to keep their minds on their praying, to concentrate their thoughts —another basic Gros Ventre religious theme—and the "tempting" behavior of those around them was seemingly a test of the vower's power of concentration, his ability to insulate himself mentally against external distractions.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

fathers back of them and the wives back of the grandfathers, according to one statement by Coming Daylight; the grandfathers in front, and the dancers and their wives back of them according to another by her. The bows of the "talls" and "shorts" were stuck upright in the ground in two crescents in front of the two respective divisions; the bows of the ritual "elder brothers" (the four councilors?), a little apart near the south or southeast ends of these two crescents.[18]

The chief ritual paraphernalia used in the Crazy Dance were the badger pelt, hoof rattles, whistles, bows, and poisoned arrows. The stuffed badger hide, "trimmed and fixed up," figured prominently in the rites. The bone whistles, hung on the neck of the dancers, were blown by them when dancing. The rattles, θaθanas, sticks about five feet long, with deer hoofs attached in a row along the upper third, were used by the grandfathers who sang, sitting in a row and pounding the ends of the rattles on the ground to beat time.

Each Crazy Dancer treated one of his arrows with poisonous wild parsley, and tied the poisoned arrow to his bow. If the dancer "got mad or any serious situation arose" he would unfasten the arrow and shoot to kill. If the arrow penetrated the skin of the victim or even scratched him, he died. This extreme measure was very rarely resorted to. We were told of no actual instance. When the dance was over these poisoned arrows were carried away to a spot where no one could find them and were buried.

The ceremonies on each of the four days of the Crazy Dance began with the painting of the bodies of the dancers and their wives, the pattern of the painting differing each day. The painting was done in the respective lodges of the leaders of the groups of two to four dancers. Here they gathered with their respective ceremonial grandfathers and "Little Crazy Dancers." The dancer and his wife, or borrowed surrogate, would sit there naked, the woman with legs close together and stretched out in front. This was a source of serious embarrassment to all concerned. The bodies

[18] Kroeber, 1908, p. 242, gives a different arrangement, with which still another statement by Coming Daylight that "the women sat on the west side" insofar agrees.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

784 Sex abstinence was generally observed before hunting, and par-
789 ticularly before and all during golden eagle trapping. Eagle
[834] trappers "had to have a special religious character, to observe
certain food taboos, and a special way of handling [being handed?]
a pipe." The leader of a war party, but not other members thereof,
also observed sex abstinence.

Do not break leg bones or ribs to extract the marrow or for other purpose, inside the lodge or house; go outside to do it, else you will get sore legs, or your horses may break their legs. Cora Chandler stated in 1940 that she still observed this latter, as her folks had always made her do. If an embryo calf were to be taken out of the belly of a buffalo, the embryo's eyes had to be extracted before it was brought into the lodge to be cooked; if the eyes were taken out inside the lodge, a member of the family would go blind, —"and this has been proven." Likewise it was forbidden to butcher and extract the brains from a buffalo head inside a lodge, and also break off the "soft end" of roast buffalo ribs. "Never use a knife to fuss with ashes or coals because you might cut yourself if you did so."

After blood-letting, the subject abstained from eating anything fried so the cut would not turn blue.

[651] There does not seem to have been any prohibition against mentioning the name of a deceased relative or other person.

777 Coming Daylight and Mary Ereaux had never heard of lucky or
801 unlucky numbers. The Boy, however, stated: "According to the old law, the people were forbidden to use seven. For instance, a war party was not to have seven members, but either more or fewer. Cases are known in which young fellows disobeyed this rule and ran into trouble. In one case of this kind six of the party got killed and only one escaped with his life."